

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Duncan Hunter, Chairman

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CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER ANNOUNCES APPROVAL OF AIR FORCE TANKER LEASE

Washington, D.C. - House Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter (R-CA) today announced the Committee has completed its review of the Air Force's proposed lease of 100 KC-767 air refueling tankers. He issued the following statement:

"After several hearings and briefings which reestablished the criticality of aerial refueling as a vital combat enabler, the Committee has reached a conclusion on the Air Force proposal. It is important to note, the aerial tanker fleet was a key enabler in combat operations over Iraq and Afghanistan. This fleet, built in the 1950s and 1960s is aging rapidly, and as the General Accounting Office notes, a replacement must be found.

"It is recognized that the preference in acquiring major defense systems is through a purchase. However, years of underfunding in our procurement accounts by an average of \$50 billion or more, has caused modernization of critical programs by the Department of Defense to be a difficult task.

"In spite of recent work by Congress and the Bush Administration to restore this funding, the current bow wave of requirements will continue to outpace available procurement funding over the next five years. Therefore, the urgent tanker requirement is directly competing with other critical defense systems for replacement funding. Against this backdrop, the tanker leasing proposal offers important advantages. It allows us to replace the aging fleet more quickly, while retaining an essential combat capability over the next several decades. Importantly, the leasing program requires less money over the next several years than a purchase would, allowing the procurement of fighter aircraft, airlift and other systems to go forward without a reduction in schedule.

"For this reason, I am endorsing the proposal by the Secretary of Defense to lease 100 KC-767 aerial refueling tankers from the Boeing Corporation. The required notification will be sent this evening."

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In a deal struck between the House Armed Services Committee and Boeing, Rep. Robin Hayes (NC-8) announced yesterday Boeing is committed to purchasing the same amount of domestic titanium in the proposed tanker lease as would have been required under traditional defense procurement guidelines.

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